

Wolcott Community Forest Committee (WCFC)
Discussion Topics for the Monthly Meeting
May 11, 2023, 6pm - 8pm

As the WCFC finalizes its Stewardship Plan for review by the Select Board, the public is invited to participate in the discussion forming the proposed language. The following subjects will be discussed at the upcoming meeting:

Recommendations for a standing Forest Committee

- Review of the proposed structure and duties for the body responsible for managing the community forest once acquired.

Allowed recreation uses at time of purchase

- Review the proposed list of permissible recreation activities in the community forest at the time of purchase:

At the beginning of Town Stewardship, as of time of purchase, the Forest Committee establishes the following baseline guidance:

Hunting:

Hunting is a long-standing traditional use for Vermont Forest land, and many community members have a history of hunting on Town Forest property. However, as public property, the Town Forest is no longer exempt from the Federal Gun Free Schools Zone Act of 1990 (as amended in 1996) which prohibits carrying firearms within 1000 feet of School Property. Therefore, at this time, Hunting in accordance with State regulations is allowed in the Town Forest EXCEPT within a Safety Zone around the School property established by the Forest Committee. At this time, the Safety Zone is defined as the portion of the Town Forest that is north and east of Gates Farm Road.

Fishing:

Fishing in accordance with State regulations is allowed in the Forest.

Trapping:

Unattended traps represent a risk factor for other recreational uses of the forest. Trapping is NOT allowed at this time.

Dogs:

Domestic dogs are allowed on the property on leash, in accordance with Town Ordinance. Owner/caretakers must collect and dispose of dog waste.

Horses:

Horse traffic requires special consideration with respect to erosion control and trail maintenance, invasive species control, compatibility with other uses, and parking accommodations. Horses are NOT allowed on the property at this time.

Bicycles (including Mountain Bikes and E-Bikes):

Bicycles are allowed in the town forest on designated trails only. Bicycle users must adhere to any and all posted trail restrictions, and yield to other trail users. Electric Bikes are categorized as bicycles, in as much as they are operated in “pedal-assist” mode. (Electric Bikes exceeding 20 MPH under power assist or otherwise operating as motor bikes are NOT permitted.)

Snowmobiles:

Snowmobiles are permitted on the existing VAST trail, as conditions allow. Snowmobilers must adhere to VAST guidelines with respect to trail closures due to conditions.

All-terrain Vehicles and other motorized recreation:

ATVs, dirt bikes and other motorized recreational vehicles require special consideration with respect to compatibility with other uses due to noise and exhaust, erosion control and trail maintenance, and parking accommodations. In accordance with the terms of the conservation easement, motorized vehicles are NOT permitted for recreational usage, except as noted above (snowmobiles, e-bikes operated as pedal-assist).

Public Events and Gatherings:

Public events sponsored by the town or other entities may occur with prior approval from the Forest Committee, Town Select Board or other appointed subcommittee, provided they are freely available to the public in a non-discriminatory manner. Approval will be conditional on commitment from the Event Organizers to ensure proper site care and post-event cleanup, as well as any other conditions the Committee or Select Board may choose to establish in the future.

Camping:

Pending further study, overnight camping is NOT permitted in the town forest.

Bonfires and cookouts:

Fires shall be allowed in sites to be designated by the Forest Committee. Fires are NOT allowed outside of those sites, except as part of planned forest management or facilities maintenance activities.

Swimming

Swimming in streams and rivers shall be allowed in areas designated by the Forest Committee.

Additional topics, should time allow:

Priorities regarding forest management

- Discuss the proposed priorities for managing the community forest and the impact upon future developments

Current use

- Review Current Use program conditions and how this affects our options for use and development of the community forest